SA Filmmaker wins in Beijing

South Australian up-and-coming filmmaker, Brendon Skinner, has won the Beijing Pitching Competition, the culminating event at the Motion Picture Association (MPA) Asian Pacific and the China International Copyright Expo (CICE) Beijing Film Workshop.

The Beijing Pitching Competition prize is meetings with executives from the Motion Picture Association and their member companies and attendance at the annual American Film Market (AFM). Held annually in Santa Monica, the AFM attracts 8000 delegates from 70 countries to hear from international film leaders.

Brendon won with his feature film pitch for *The Pulse*, a family superhero film set in Sydney conceived with his co-directing and co-producing partner Simon Williams. Brendon and Simon have made several award winning shorts, which have screened nationally and internationally, and received a nomination in this year’s IF awards. Brendon and Simon, along with their associate Megan Huitema, are in a mentorship and development deal with South Australia’s AMPCO Films.

Brendon said of his win:

"Dreams do come true! And this is the perfect end to a fabulous year of intensive development and training. Simon and I have always loved *The Pulse*, and we knew we are aiming high with this project. This win has given us the confidence to aim even higher. We have some great and wonderful people behind us that really believe in what we’re trying to do. Now we know we can do it. We’ve gone from excitement to terror and now elation. Hollywood? US Studios? American Film Market? The workshop here was fabulous, and the opportunity that MPA have now given us is just incredible. I did the pitch, but standing behind me was a great team and a great dream."

The Beijing Pitching Competition prize has already impacted on previous winners careers with the 2006 Pitching Competition winner, Xue Xialou making the 2010 feature *Ocean Heaven* starring Jet Li. *Ocean Heaven* screened at the Shanghai International Film Festival, has been sold into several territories and won her Emerging Talent of the Year at CineAsia.

This is the first year that an Australian has been selected to attend at the Beijing MPA CICE Film Workshop, an opportunity brokered by Motion Picture Australia. The Workshop brings together the best emerging filmmakers from across the Asia Pacific region.

Also attending are senior Chinese and international filmmakers creating a forum to exchange ideas on the craft, business and technology. A further aim is to develop Asia Pacific emerging filmmakers’ careers through expanding their networks and by them finding potential collaborators in the region.

Selection of the Australian representative was undertaken by the Screen Development Network (SDN), a coalition of state based organisations, that receive funding from Screen Australia and their state based screen agencies. Through their extensive programs of production initiatives, mentoring, workshops and training, SDN is a gateway to the professional screen industry.

Brendon first won his SA state-based competition, hosted by the Media Resource Centre. He was then selected to represent Australia following the National Pitch Competition, held in Sydney at Metro Screen. Chair of the Screen Development Network, Christina Alvarez said

"The SDN ran workshops and pitching competitions in every State to ensure we found the best candidate to represent Australia. We are very excited to see the Australian candidate compete so successfully against the best emerging talent in the Asia Pacific region."

Director of the MRC, Gail Kovatseff said,

"We are really happy for Brendan. He is part of a very motivated, driven young team, which worked out of the MRC offices during 2010 as part of the South Australian Screen Awards Emerging Producer prize. They were then picked up by AMPCO Films to work under an in-house mentoring and development programme, and now with this win in Beijing, they have made a significant step towards getting their first feature made."

Mario Andreacchio of AMPCO Films, said

"Over the last year, AMPCO Films has aimed to accelerate the team under an intensive programme of development, commencing with presenting and pitching their projects at
Cannes. We have been working towards preparing *The Pulse* as a Chinese-Australian co-production and the opportunity for Brendan and Simon to attend the Beijing Film Workshop has been very timely. The team have big dreams, and we are so grateful that the MRC and SDN have recognised this. They also have the responsive talent that we at AMPCO are trying to nurture and discipline. I have every confidence that they will be impressive when they go to Hollywood next year. In the meantime, we are trying to make sense of the flurry of interest and offers coming in.

*Brendon’s attendance at the National Pitching Competition was assisted by support from the Media Resource Centre and Screen Development Network. His attendance at Beijing was assisted by support from Motion Picture Australia, Screen Australia, Convergen and AMPCO Films, with additional support from the South Australian Film Corporation and Carclew Youth Arts for Simon to attend as well.*